



OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Washington State
Conservation Commission
PO Box 47721
Olympia, WA 98504-7721
360/407-6200
Fax: 360/407-6215
www.scc.wa.gov

APPROVED SEPTEMBER 2, 2009

The Farmland Preservation Task Force met on May 6, 2009 at the Kittitas Valley Event Center in Ellensburg, Washington. Chair Bob Hart called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m.

MEMBERS ATTENDED

Chair Bob Hart
Don Munks
Richard Thomason
Senator Honeyford
Representative Springer
John Mankowski
Jake Anderson
Roylene Rides at the Door
Dee Caputo
Fred Colvin
Commissioner Rudy Plager
Lynn Bahrych
Lee Faulconer
Jeff Emtman
Sheryl Cox

COMMISSION STAFF

Mark Clark, Executive Director
Ron Shultz, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations Director
Josh Giuntoli, Project Coordinator
Lori Gonzalez, Administrative Assistant

GUESTS

Kammie Bunes, RCO
Don Larsen, WDFW
John Larson, WACD
Mike Tobin, North Yakima CD
Jennifer Quan, WDFW
Brad Avery, Dept. of Agriculture
Tom Tebb, Dept. of Ecology
Diana Hillis, Kittitas CD
Lyla Hanson, Public

ADMINISTRATIVE

Commissioner Rudy Plager moved to approve the February Meeting Minutes that include the correct spelling of Mike Rundlett's name. Jeff Emtman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

OFP ACTIVITY REPORT AND SUB GROUP REPORT

Josh Giuntoli, agency staff, briefed the Task Force on the NASS Agriculture Data that is included in the meeting packets as well as a handout. The handout is a table of all the counties and census data. Josh specifically showed the Grays Harbor data on how it had a 123 percent increase of farm ground; he mentioned that Whatcom also showed a 31 percent decrease in farmland. Whatcom should have been reported at 126,000 acres instead of 148,000. There is roughly 20,000 acres that was misrepresented and now is affecting Whatcom's ability to apply for federal grants. Because of the error, it has sparked interest on the rest of the data being presented. This makes it difficult to track our progress on preserving farmland. Josh has a meeting with David Knopf, Director, USDA NASS, to go over the numbers and what the criteria is in getting the data and see if they can try to put out a correction. Josh will provide an update from his meeting with Mr. Knopf in September.

Josh talked about the sub group work that had been developed from the February meeting. Josh has been able to touch base with many of the members and has done a lot of research on the various subjects.

John Mankowski mentioned that the work the Future of Farming along with working with stakeholders and the work of OFP all together is a great stepping-stone to drive the future of agricultural policy. This information will definitely be used as a blue print for the Legislature and the Governor when they do begin discussions of developing the budget and policies regarding agriculture.

Ron Shultz reported the final staff activity. He had been invited by the State BAR Association to do a presentation specifically on farmland preservation techniques; his presentation included the following topics: transfer of development rights, conservation easements and conservation markets as well as other tools attorneys can use when working in cases with local farmers and landowners. Lynn Bahrych also attended The Environmental Law Conference.

Ron also pointed out to the Task Force members the WA Conservation Markets Study Final Report that is in their meeting packets. We had funds to do this conservation study and two pilot projects. Due to budget downfall, the two pilot projects could not be accomplished. However, the final Conservation Markets Study is a step to moving forward and we could find funding from other funding sources to continue with the projects.

STATE POLICY ON FARMLAND PRESENTATION

Ron Shultz did a presentation on the state policy on farmland preservation. He presented the background of farmland preservation. The issue on farmland preservation that we need to keep in mind is that there are two different but connected issues and they are, what our policy on farmland preservation is, and what is our policy on land acquisitions? Although these two sound similar, they really are two different issues that need to be addressed.

Ron also provided the Task Force the final report submitted to the Washington State Legislature titled: Toward a Coordination Strategy for Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisitions in Washington State, by The Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation in June 2005. Ron specifically pointed out pages two & three, which profile the different state agencies, land acquisition strategies, and states the purpose each agency has in the acquisitions that they do.

For example, State Parks have an acquisition for park, recreation activities, Fish and Wildlife have acquisitions for enhancing hunting, and fishing opportunities, to protect wildlife habitat, and Dept. of Natural Resources maintains the viability of State Trusts. There was a lot of discussion on land acquisition. For us to establish an overall state policy, Lynn Bahrych wanted to reiterate past Director of Agriculture, Valoria Loveland's statement from the first OFP meeting "The challenge is, and our goal is, no net loss of farmland." Lynn states that should be our goal as a Task Force and Washington state's goal.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lyla Hanson, married for over 50 years into a generational farm, has seen the many struggles, and is still amazed how her family manages to keep their land intact and maintain a viable, productive and happy farm. She expressed her passion for agriculture and how she continues to educate herself with four degrees and one being in Land Use Planning. She stated that eventually, we will not have the same agriculture as we used to as she has observed the growth of development occurring around her. She talked about when the Growth Management Act first came out and just polarized their County,

and she spoke of TDR's and the cost of food. "Farmers do not make much profit these days." She also says it is hard to stay in agriculture and stay happy, but he and thier family try.

WWRP RANKING CRITERIA

Kammie Bunes, Grants Manager from the Recreation and Conservation Office presented the functions of the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

Their expertise as an agency is funding grants to local agencies, state agencies, and not for profit groups. She explained how the farmland preservation program came to their agency; and how they needed to form an ad hoc advisory committee to help develop this program.

The committee consisted of members from the Task Force, Lee Faulconer, Dee Caputo, Fred Colvin and WSCC staff member, Stu Trefry as well as five other folks. They provided guidance to RCO on how to organize the policy recommendations and guidance on how to run the grant program as well as assisted in who should be on the final advisory committee who will be doing the final ranking.

NORTH YAKIMA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Mike Tobin, District Manager of the North Yakima Conservation District (NYCD) presented to the Task Force a letter from the NYCD requesting to implement a working relationship with the Department of Fish and Wildlife where the NYCD would facilitate, negotiate or by any other means necessary, assist WDFW in establishing Conservation Easements with private landowners within the NYCD.

Part of NYCD Annual and 5 Year plans prioritized "Agricultural Preservation-Urban Interface-Land Use Planning" as its top priority. This is NYCD's priority because of the way in which the renewable natural resources of the District are impacted by the subdivision and development of agricultural lands and rangelands. As a result of development, losses of resource lands are irreversible and can be catastrophic to any one or more of the Districts renewable natural resources.

Mike stated that NYCD has strong support from many of the landowners that are ready to commit efforts towards development of Conservation Easements. NYCD believes that through the development of a partnership with the WDFW and by using Conservation Easements as a tool, both entities can achieve their Missions and Goals.

EXEMPT WELLS/STOCKWATERING 101

G. Thomas Tebb, from the Department of Ecology presented a 101 education on Washington State's Groundwater Exemption.

GRAZING UPDATE/LANDS ENHANCEMENT

Jennifer Quan, from the Department of Fish and Wildlife presented to the Task Force. She walked through the local plan they have been working on for many years, the Wild Horse Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRM). Jennifer also shared another pilot project in process right now on the Eastside of the state.

ADOPTION OF INDICATORS

The State Conservation Commission was briefed on a proposed set of indicators to measure the parameters of farmland preservation. The Commission forwarded these indicators to the Task Force for their review and consideration.

DIRECTORS REPORT/UPDATE

Mark Clark presented legislation reports created by Josh. Josh presented bills that were passed and signed by the Governor and bills that were presented during session that were of interest regarding agriculture.

Mark and Ron briefly discussed where the Commission is with the Operations Budget and Capital Budget. The Commission does not have any provisos in their budget, so the Commissioners need to allocate the money to the districts and programs.

Mark also mentioned that there have been discussions of re-organizations of the Natural Resource Agencies. Mark and staff have been working hard to keep the Commission as an independent agency that in turn will continue to be a well-balanced and effective agency.

NEXT MEETING

The next Task Force Meeting will be on September 2, 2009 at the Virginia Grainger Building, in Okanogan, Washington. The Okanogan Conservation District is coordinating a tour for September 1, 2009.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.